



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
MATERIALS TRANSPORTATION BUREAU  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

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Title 49—Transportation

CHAPTER I—MATERIALS TRANSPORTATION  
BUREAU, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

[Docket No. HM-38; Amdt. 179-21]

PART 179—SPECIFICATIONS FOR TANK CARS

Certain Couplers for Use of Tank Cars Built  
After January 1, 1971; Approval

AGENCY: Materials Transportation  
Bureau, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This rule provides for certain couplers approved by the Federal Railroad Administrator for use on tank cars built after January 1, 1971. The amendments adopted herein are based on requests received from the Committee on Tank Cars of the Railway Progress Institute (RPI), the Union Carbide Corp., E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., and the AAR to expand the list of approved couplers because a large number of existing tank cars are now equipped with AAR approved E shelf and F shelf couplers currently are not approved by Administrator.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These regulations become effective on February 23, 1978.

ADDRESSES: All material pertinent to this proceeding are available for examination during regular business hours in Room 6500, Trans Point Building, 2100 Second Street SW., Washington, D.C. 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

William F. Black, Office of Safety,  
Federal Railroad Administration,  
202-426-2748.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 15, 1977, the Materials Transportation Bureau (the Bureau) published Amendment Nos. 173-108 and 179-19 (Docket HM-144; 42 FR 16306). These amendments require, as pertinent here, that all DOT classes 112 and 114 tank cars be equipped with special couplers capable of resisting vertical disengagements. Under 179.105-6(d), the E top and bottom shelf couplers and F top shelf couplers approved by the Administrator were listed for installation without verification testing under § 179.105-

Under amended § 179.105-6(d), E top and bottom shelf couplers designated by the Association of American Railroads' (AAR) Catalog Nos. SE67BHT, SE67BHTE, SE68BHT or SE68BHTE and F top shelf couplers designated by the AAR Catalog Nos. SF73AHT, SF73AHTE, SF79CHT or SF79CHTE

are listed for installation on DOT classes 112 and 114 tank cars.

On November 22, 1977, the Bureau issued Amendment No. 179-20 (Docket No. HM-38; published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on December 5, 1977; 42 FR 61465) to permit, under § 179.14, the use of certain couplers on tank cars built after January 1, 1971.

Under amended § 179.14, F type couplers designated by AAR Catalog Nos. F70CHT, F70CHTE, F73AHT, F73AHTE, F79CHT and F79CHTE, E top and bottom shelf couplers Nos. SE67BHT, SE67BHTE, SE68BHT and SE68BHTE, and F top shelf couplers Nos. SF73AHT, SF73AHTE, SF79CHT, and SF79CHTE are approved by the Administrator for use on tank cars built after January 1, 1971.

The F type couplers listed in amended § 179.14 are of the same design as those couplers now listed in § 179.14(a)(2) except the AAR Catalog Nos. have been changed due to upgraded materials. These F type couplers and the E top bottom shelf couplers listed in amended § 179.14 are those couplers with various shank lengths which have been installed in existing tank cars in order to negotiate sharp curves in some of the older chemical plants. Since these E top and bottom shelf couplers and F top shelf couplers have been installed on existing DOT classes 112 and 114 tank cars and the shelf couplers provide an acceptable coupler restraint system to reduce coupler overriding and resulting head punctures, denting and car damage, they have been listed in amended § 179.105-6.

The amendments adopted herein are based on requests received from the Committee on Tank Cars of the Railway Progress Institute (RPI), the Union Carbide Corp., E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., and the AAR to expand the list of approved couplers because a large number of existing tank cars are now equipped with AAR approved E shelf and F shelf couplers which currently are not approved by the Administrator.

It is the Bureau's opinion that the approval of these requested couplers adopted herein will have minimal economic impact. Since the currently approved E and F couplers will continue as alternative approved couplers, no economic hardship will result from issuance of this approval. Moreover, the use of shelf couplers is anticipated to reduce coupler overriding and resulting tank head punctures, denting, and car damage, thereby promoting safety.

Since this amendment merely provides an alternate method of compliance with an existing regulation and does not impose a burden on regulated persons, I find that notice and public

procedure thereon are unnecessary and that it may be made effective on less than 30 days' notice.

Primary drafters of this document are William F. Black, Office of Safety of the Federal Railroad Administration, and George W. Tenley, Jr., Office of the Chief Counsel, Research and Special Programs Directorate.

In consideration of the foregoing, Part 179 of Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, is amended as follows:

1. In § 179.14, paragraphs (a)(4) and (a)(5) are added to read as follows:

§ 179.14 Tank car couplers.

(a) \* \* \*

(4) Effective January 1, 1978, couplers designated by the Association of American Railroads' Catalog Nos. F70CHT, F70CHTE, F73AHT, F73AHTE, F79CHT, and F79CHTE, which have modified shanks and solid butt ends, but do not have pin bearing blocks, are approved.

(5) Effective January 1, 1978, couplers designated by the Association of American Railroads' Catalog Nos. SE67BHT, SE67BHTE, SE68BHT, SE68BHTE, SF73AHT, SF73AHTE, SF79CHT, and SF79CHTE are approved.

2. In § 179.105-6, paragraphs (d)(1) and (d)(2) are revised to read as follows:

§ 179.105-6 Coupler vertical restraint system.

\* \* \*

(d) \* \* \*

(1) E top and bottom shelf couplers designated by the Association of American Railroads' Catalog Nos. SE60CHT, SE60CHTE, SE67BHT, SE67BHTE, SE68BHT or SE68BHTE; or

(2) F top shelf couplers designated by the Association of American Railroads' Catalog Nos. SF70CHT, SF70CHTE, SF73AHT, SF73AHTE, SF79CHT or SF79CHTE.

(49 U.S.C. 1803, 1804, 1808; 49 CFR 1.53(e))

NOTE.—The Materials Transportation Bureau has determined that this document does not contain a major proposal requiring the preparation of an Economic Impact Statement under Executive Order 11821 and OMB Circular A-107 or an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

Issued in Washington, D.C., on February 14, 1978.

L. D. SANTMAN,  
Acting Director, Materials  
Transportation Bureau.

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